

# PRESS RELEASE

## Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
September 25, 2002

CONTACT:  
Dena Graziano: (202) 226-6888

### CONYERS URGES REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP TO BRING HATE CRIMES BILL TO THE FLOOR

Today, Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee issued the following statement at a press conference today urging the Republican leadership to bring the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act to the floor for a vote:

“The Hate Crimes Prevention Act currently has 206 bipartisan cosponsors and would (1) provide assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies, (2) amend federal law to streamline the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes by loosening the federally protected activity provision, and (3) add coverage of sexual orientation, gender and disability to covered classifications.

An identical measure not only passed the Senate last Congress as part of the Department of Defense Authorization bill, but was approved by the House pursuant to a motion to instruct on a 232-192 vote. Despite these bicameral, bipartisan votes, Republican Leaders insisted the hate crimes bill be removed from the Department of Defense bill. Because of this strong bipartisan history, we are confident that this legislation could easily pass the House, but the leadership has failed to schedule a vote. It has therefore become evident that a discharge petition is the *only way* to bring this important legislation to the floor.

The events following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have brought new urgency to the call for meaningful Hate Crimes legislation. Statistics confirm what we feared from the backlash of hate crimes that occurred following the terrorist attacks.

In Florida, hate crimes motivated by religion and national origin almost doubled from 2000 to 2001. Illinois reported five times more hate crimes against people of Arab decent in 2001 than 2000. And, Los Angeles reported a surge with an 11 percent increase in that one county alone for the year. In addition, private organizations that track hate crimes have reported record numbers, including the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee which has investigated, documented and referred to federal authorities over 5000 incidents, including several murders.

It is a disturbing reality that these recent crimes may have been prevented if this House had addressed the nationwide epidemic of hate violence in the years that have followed the brutal lynching of James Byrd and the cold blooded murder of Matthew Shepard. I have introduced the Hate Crimes Prevention Act in the last 3 congresses, but Republican leaders (Armey, DeLay, and Co.) have refused to schedule committee hearings, committee mark-ups, or floor consideration of this important bill.

It is long overdue that Congress make a statement that crimes of hate and prejudice will not be tolerated in America. It is a federal crime to hijack an automobile or to possess cocaine, and it ought to be a federal crime to drag a man to death because of his race or to brutally beat a person because of his or her sexual orientation. These are crimes that shock and shame our national conscience and they should be subject to federal law enforcement assistance and prosecution.

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act is a constructive and measured response to these types of crimes which are motivated by prejudice and hate and it must be brought to the floor for a vote.”